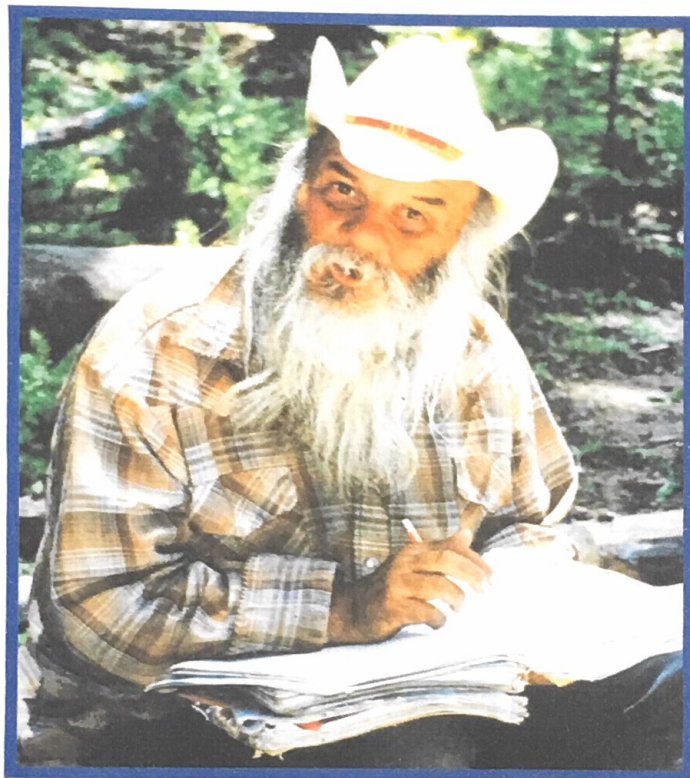




# Rainbow Family

## Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.  
Interviews with Rainbow  
Family of Living Light  
folks conducted between  
1977 and 2008.*

*Scanned in 2018.*

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## THE STP FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The STP Family Family were the classical "street people" at the height of the late 60's-early 70's youth upheaval and are one of the streams that flowed into Rainbow-particularly the Shanti Sena/security camp Family. Trying to describe their rise and decline of STP is like trying to reconstruct an event that happened centuries ago from the spoken traditions of a few descendants. But in this case, the traditions are of something that came into existence since I did four years of college. They were told to me by people still in their twenties as having been passed on to them from people a few years older than themselves. So what is offered here as a commentary on the life stories has an uncertain quality and is open to correction.

STP came from Up Against the Wall, Motherfuckers, a group of anarchists who began hanging out in a loft on the Lower East Side of New York City some time before June, 1967, when I first saw them at the national convention of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] in Ann Arbor. The Motherfuckers were recognized as an SDS chapter at the December, 1967, SDS National Council in Bloomington, Indiana. Once they passed a resolution that SDS should "talk less and drink more." They hung out/helped out at the Liberty Outlet House, a place that sold crafts made by Black people in Mississippi. Liberty House was run by Abbie Hoffman, who had been a civil rights worker in Mississippi.

In May, 1968 John of the Motherfuckers and others of that family went to the hills near Boulder, Colorado, where several thousand young people had gathered. As Barry Plunker, who was there, says, it was the first hippie gathering, but with no organizers and no written announcements. Many people were not too sure of why they were there, but many of them had heard a rumor that the asteroid Icarus was about to crash into California and sink it into the sea, and Colorado would be a safer place. Another rumor says that the Icarus rumor was spread by merchants in Haight-Ashbury to get rid of the



broke hippies who were thronging the sidewalks in front of their stores.) Anyway this spontaneous 1968 gathering seems to have been where Barry got the idea to have the 1972 Rainbow Gathering in Colorado.

John and the other Motherfuckers stayed in the University of Colorado fringe community in Boulder after the Summer gathering in May. John got the name STP John. He made the powerful hallucinogen STP - named not for the lubricant, but for Sagittarius, Taurus and Pisces, the signs of John and his close associates, Bishop and Little Brother (LB). John and the other Motherfuckers traveled back and forth between Boulder and New York. They dealt marijuana, LSD and STP.

The Motherfuckers were fiercely opposed to "death drugs" - any speed, downers and opiates - especially to heroin. The younger brother of Dick Motherfucker had died of a heroin overdose. The Motherfuckers regarded it as their political duty to speak strongly against heroin to any of the numerous young people who stayed with them or hung out with them on the street.

Sometime around October, 1969, the Motherfuckers plastered copies of a poster called OFF OUR BACKS on walls around New York City. Some excerpts from the text of the poster follow:

"Smack, speed and downers are a few of the weapons used to keep us down - to keep us down, they keep us apart. As long as we think it's just one person having a bummer, there's no solution. Alone we have no alternative. The Man picks us off one by one. BUT together we can begin to fight back.

"There used to be a lot of gangs in New York. These gangs were bought with dope and money. In Chicago they still have a lot of gangs, Black, Latin and White. These gangs fought with each other a lot at the same time the Pig was vampiric on them. The Black Panther Party led the way by showing us who the real enemy was; that fighting among ourselves was making the Man's work



east or, cause all of us, Black, Brown, Yellow and White have a common enemy who can be defeated if we struggle together. Gettin together means defending our brothers and sisters from the Pig. It means telling the dude that pushes junk by cutting grass with other stuff that he's siding with the Pig. If he doesn't understand that, we got to deal with that too. Those of us that are strong got to stop more of us from getting into the heavy drug scene. That's why being together is important because it shows an example to others around us... Cause gangs in Chicago are gettin political in the same way the Panthers are. These gangs which were social clubs are now beginning to relate to the political needs of their communities...

"This messed-up society is the reason many brothers and sisters are into smack and speed. Smack and speed are a good head compared to the ordinary reality of our daily lives. To kick any habit like smack or speed, you must have a real alternative to the life that drove you to hard stuff first of all. A lot of us are digging on the fact that revolution shows the way to end a lot of shit and misery. That working with our brothers and sisters in a revolutionary way so each of us have a stake in a new society makes our lives more meaningful and is better than being strung out.

STP - STOP THE PIG / SERVE THE PEOPLE."

Apparently around this time, STP John and others took some guns into the apartment of a heroin dealer and forced him to flush his heroin down the toilet. Probably a contract was put out on them and they scattered - some to Boulder, some to Austin and some to New Mexico. STP John was killed in Boulder.

The young people who were affected by the Motherfuckers seem to have included only a few native New York gang kids. Most of them were runaway youth from all parts of the country who looked to the Motherfuckers for shelter and help at least until they could take care of themselves on the street. As has been said, there were similar groups of runaway youths around leftists like the Motherfuckers in many places.



This particular bunch of young people took on a group life of its own as the STP Family. They provided one another with shared supplies and protection from enemies and aid in dope dealing, begging and stealing. Traveling bands of STP people attracted "new riders" who attracted more "new riders."

Once the Motherfuckers scattered, the left-wing consciousness they had hoped to develop in these young people tended to die down or disappear. Although most STP people I have met avoided using needles, they tended to drink very heavily and get involved in frequent brawls and trouble. A large portion of early STP Family were dead or in prison or in hiding by 1975. Most of the rest of them saw that they couldn't continue their way of life much longer and made attempts to settle down.

Rainbow has been one of the places STP people have come to as part of a process of settling down (if not geographically (since many Rainbow people are always on the move) at least a more stable life-style while in motion.

My impression is that most STP'ers I have known are from working class backgrounds and often from very unstable home lives. They usually went on the road between ages 15 and 18. Most of them seem deep down to have rather conventional beliefs - like Raunchy Ron's feeling that a woman should be a virgin when she marries, although he acknowledges the unlikelihood of finding such a woman. Several STP'ers have expressed strong racist feelings around me, although I have met a black woman STP'er. Most of their life stories show people who are making attempts at stable job and home lives.

There are more unemployed and part-time employed young people on the road than ever, but STP as such is no longer there as a model for their behavior. Brothers and sisters at the gatherings who are either STP or influenced by STP have tended to give up practices that most people found objectionable,



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such as various money-raising scams. The road people who come to the gatherings in larger and larger numbers seem to be among those who are most devoted to the values of the gathering. These values include the independence and dignity that are characteristic of STP people, but also a strong sense of responsibility to the gathering that STP people in the past often didn't feel.